Chapter 4: Russia's International Support

Coinciding with Germany's increasing engagement with Saudi Arabia, will be Russia's engagement with Latin America. During the Cold War, the Cuban Revolution in the 1950s provided a strategic framework for the Soviet Union's subversion of US security interests in the western hemisphere. Havana thus became ground zero for Moscow's efforts, and it was there that the Soviet Union established a military base. For a number of years, the Soviet Union provided direct military aid to Cuba via shipping arms to Havana. They also supported other leftist/anti-US regimes in Latin America during the Cold War. But when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Moscow had reduced their presence and influence there, which ultimately took Russia off the radar of the US security apparatus. Nevertheless, the new Russian Federation inherited some of those Latin American/Soviet ties of the past, but at the same time, Russia was aware that any attempts to re-establish those Cold Era partnerships would require the type of arrangement that Russia would not be able to afford. And this was the case initially after the establishment of the Russian Federation in 1991. However, things would change in the late 1990s, when Russia would increase their engagement of Latin American countries and seek to forge greater cooperation, especially with those nations who were having contentious issues with the United States, one such being Columbia. Russia's support for Columbia's president at the time, Ernesto Samper, despite his ties to drug cartels, led to Columbia purchasing Russian military helicopters instead of US machinery. This move by Columbia was in breach of a deal in which Columbia agreed to purchase US-made equipment. Russia followed up by looking to establish—for its arms exports—a market in Latin America. Thus, Russia's trade relationship with Latin America increased, more specifically with countries like Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico. Still and all, it was largely less noteworthy than Russia's trade agreements with much of Europe, and Russia's ties with Latin America at this time in the late 1990s/early 2000s posed no security issue to the United States. Despite that being the case, many Latin American countries would become, nonetheless, more compelled, as a result of this Russian engagement of the region, to not only exert more defiance to US interests, but also seek to establish themselves more prominently on the international scene as major players in global affairs. Russia was further able to establish rapport with Latin American countries by way of their aloof-nees towards internal domestic policy within Latin American countries. Russia normally wouldn't question Cuba or Venezuela about human rights abuses, and Russia knew that those countries would not question them in a similar fashion. Since the 2000s, amid NATO's growing expansion eastward, Russia's

concurrent anti-Americanism and insistence on a multi-polar world order found resonance among leaders in Latin America. Hugo Chavez, Raul Castro, and Daniel Ortega were among Latin America's most Russia-friendly leaders. Russia's nostalgia movement, which glorified the era of Russia's past—from the Russian empire to the Soviet Union—coincided with Russia's engagement of Latin America which has its origins during the time of the Soviet Union when the Soviet Union set up a military base and ballistic missiles in Cuba in the 1960s. At the same time, those high ranking officials in Latin America who had fond memories of the Cold War era insurgencies there were welcoming of this desire to re-establish those close ties. They also knew that if such close ties were unattainable, they could still benefit financially from a cooperation with Russia. And this turned out to be the case. Cuba had its Soviet era debt canceled by the Russian Federation, and along with Nicaragua and Venezuela, received financial aid from Russia in exchange for recognizing Russia's policy within Russia's geopolitical sphere of influence in eastern Europe. Those Latin American countries recognized separatist regions in Georgia, and agreed to allow Russia to set up sovereign military bases in their countries at a future date. In 2014, Russia's defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced Russia's plans to build military bases in Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela, and much of this effort was motivated by US influence in the Ukraine crisis.

Back in 2011, Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout was convicted in the Unites States on four counts of conspiracy to sell antiaircraft weapons to Columbian terrorists for the purpose of using them against Americans. This was to the dismay of the Russian Federation, whom would accuse the US of violating international standards of arrest and detention. In retrospect, the engagement of Russia towards Latin America since 2000 and more ominously after 2010 has been for the purpose of dealing with US policy in eastern Europe, which has been a policy that largely ignored Russia's concerns. Even back in 1997, Boris Nemtsov, who was Russia's Deputy Prime Minister at the time, would state during a visit to Latin America that a Russian presence in Latin America could help Russia deter any US anti-Russian influence near Russia's borders. US support for Georgia and Ukraine in 2008 and 2014 respectively led to Russia scaling up its military cooperation with Nicaragua.

Russia's engagement in Latin America is not solely for the purpose of military and economics, but for promotional reasons. Russia has promoted their growing ties with Latin America to the Russian audience as something to be part and parcel of Russia's growing global influence and their audacious defiance of the United States, setting up military cooperation right in their backyard. However, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which had a negative impact on how Russians view the Kremlin, Russia may

become more urged to establish media influence in foreign countries for the sake of mending their international reputation, and this could become more evident in Latin America. It is possible that Russia may seek to promote its culture abroad by persuading foreign countries to broadcast Russian TV or Russian media on their networks. Russia, in recent years, had certainly presented Latin American culture to the Russian public, and because of that, the Russian public is more aware of Latin America's importance to Russia. Russia has also established Spanish-langauge broadcasting division for its RT network. While based in Moscow, the RT Spanish channel has bureaus in Cuba, Venezuela, and Argentina. It can be expected that Russia's engagement of Latin America, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022—largely motivated by NATO expansion—will expand considerably along economic, military, and political lines, and will reach as far was Mexico. The growing Latin American population in Texas will pose a serious risk to America's geographical overlay as Russia will likely seek to instigate separatism there. With the aid of Critical Race Theory doctrines being spread in US schools, Russia may find it even easier to sow discord among Americans. Heightened Russian influence will also embolden nations in Latin America to exert more political assertiveness with less and less regard for US interests. Due to this developing situation in Latin America, security agencies like the US's CIA and Russia's FSB will increase their intelligence gathering operations there, leading to a very intense intelligence and subversion war as American sentiment in Latin America will become of grave concern for the US amid a diplomatic tug or war between the US and Russia for the support of Latin American leaders. Much like Ukraine was the ultimate goal of NATO in Eastern Europe for the sake of cementing US dominance over Russia, Texas will be the ultimate goal and primary focal point of Russia's intention to destabilize the United States and end its unipolar moment. Russia will look to achieve this goal by slowly making their way from Latin America.

Western outrage and sanctions imposed upon Russia will likely only have a short term effect on the Russian state. In fact, the residual effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine will in the long run more negatively impact the international economic standing of the United States. It has been clear that even throughout the Russia/Ukraine war, many nations have been apprehensive about excoriating or confronting Russia about its full-scale invasion of its foremost western neighbor, Ukraine. A good portion of these reluctant countries are in fact US allies. The nations which declare an almost unconditional backing of Russia since the invasion of Ukraine have been Syria, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela. Other countries like China have taken a conciliatory

approach, choosing not to refer to Russia's military incursion of Ukraine as an "invasion." China has also refused to participate in widespread western efforts to sanction Russia. Much of this trepidation among nations to enact reprisals against Russia is largely due in part to their economic and military ties to Russia. Russia has been able to use their vast resources of oil, arms, and defense to secure strategic partnerships. Because of this, Russia may have a lifeline to escape any long term impact of the economic constraints levied upon them by the west. Russia is paying close attention to those nations that have benefited from Russian ties, but considers China as its most critical partner who can mitigate the damage that sanctions will trigger. Many consider China's strong ties to Russia as a possible catalyst towards productive peace talks between Russia and Ukraine with China as a mediator.

Russia provides 60 percent of India's military artillery, as the byproduct of a relationship that spans decades. For this reason, India has declined to engage in provocative rhetoric about Russia's war in Ukraine, and has also encouraged for a peaceful solution to the crisis. They also applied this approach after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. There are certain implication for India that would come with ostracizing Russia, implications that India is not prepared to encounter in the near term. India has attempted to wean itself from its arms reliance on Russia by pursuing arms deals with other nations, but has nevertheless remained reliant on Russia in this regard. Such has been imperative due to the hostility India has encountered from Pakistan and China, which is why India is very eager about measures that could end the Russia/Ukraine war. In the meantime, India's central bank is considering a trade agreement with Russia that would involve the exclusive use of Indian rupees and rubles for transactions. India also continues to buy Russian oil and gas and is looking to set up a deal in which India would buy 3 million barrels of oil from Russia at a discount.

Israel is another country that has been reluctant to impose sanctions against Russia since it is in their law that they could only apply sanctions against a country that has been anathematized to be an enemy to Israel. Israel has also vowed not to supply arms to Ukraine, and refuses to sell pegasus spyware to NATO members. However, Israel has volunteered to mediate peace between Russia and Ukraine, as Israel's Prime Minister has spoken to both the Russian president Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Much of Israel's cautios approach towards Russia has to do with Russia's presence in Syria as an ally to the Assad government, and the fact that Russia has allowed Israel's air force to conduct strikes on Iran bases stationed in Syria. Iran stores arms on Syrian soil and ships them to Hezbollah in Lebanon and militia groups in Yemen and the Gaza strip. In being allowed to

access Syrian airspace, Israel can better protect their own national security. In this regard, Russia is a critical ally for the state of Israel, and the biggest gain that Russia can acquire in relation to Israel is media support that could combat western propaganda which has largely painted Russia as a longstanding threat to the United States and the world since World War II. As a stand-between between Israel and Iran/Shiite and Sunni sectarianism, Russia will be able to garner considerable media aid from the likes of reputable and renown news outlets such as the Jerusalem Post and Al Jazeera, both of which will become central to the reporting of global affairs.

Saudi Arabia and OPEC member countries have also remained keen to avoid condemning Russia for the invasion of Ukraine. Saudi Arabia and OPEC consider Russia as a critical ally in the regulation of global oil prices. In 2019, OPEC invited Russia to be part of an expanded network called "OPEC+" to help facilitate cost-efficient and profitable oil output for the purpose of countering the American shale oil boom. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Saudi Arabia has refused requests by the US to increase oil output in order to combat the rise of oil prices that came about as a result of sanctions and the oil embargoes against Russia. Thus Saudi Arabia has indicated that hey are unwilling to compromise the strategic partnership between OPEC and Russia on global oil output.

While Turkey has condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, they have refused to sanction or cut off Russia's access to their airspace. Turkey's considers Russia's presence in Syria as a deterrent to the development of a possible Kurdish state near Turkey's border. Turkey has also purchased s-400 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia and set up energy contracts. Still and all, Turkey remains intent on navigating all sides of the conflict. Despite their ties with Russia, Turkey has delivered Turkish made drones to Ukraine, which have helped Ukraine resist the Russian invasion.

South Africa has openly blamed NATO for the war in Ukraine and refused to condemn Russia. For South Africa, their perspective is heavily rooted in a backdrop going back to the Cold War era when the Soviet Union backed anti-apartheid activists in South Africa, while the United States would maintain their support for the apartheid regime for a number of years.